

Preface

The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), in consultation with other Agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services, initiated the Healthy Aging Project to enhance and promote the health of older people. A major objective of the Healthy Aging Project is to identify, synthesize and disseminate evidence and expert opinion on health promotion and disease prevention interventions that are evidence-based. HCFA is sponsoring reports that present evidence and expert opinion to assist public and private sector organizations in their efforts to improve the delivery of Medicare-covered preventive benefits and promote behavioral risk factor reduction. These reports provide comprehensive, science-based information on effective and cost-effective interventions targeting the senior population. RAND is producing these reports under a HCFA contract.

HCFA expects that these evidence reports will inform peer review organizations, individual health plans, providers and purchasers, including Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the health care system as a whole by providing important information to help improve the delivery and quality of preventive health care for older people.

We welcome written comments on this evidence report. They may be sent to:

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The Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center

The Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center is part of the Evidence-Based Practice Program sponsored by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. One of 12 such Centers nationwide, the Center conducts systematic reviews and technology assessments of all aspects of health care; performs research on improving the methods of synthesizing the scientific evidence and developing evidence reports and technology assessments; and provides technical assistance to other organizations in their efforts to translate evidence reports and technology assessments into guidelines, performance measures, and other quality-improvement tools.

The Center combines the talents of RAND and its five affiliated regional health care institutions: the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of California, San Diego; Cedars-Sinai Medical Center; the University of Southern California; and Value Health Sciences. In addition, through the VA/RAND/ University of California Field Program "Center for the Study of Health Care Provider Behavior," four Department of Veterans Affairs facilities collaborate with the Center. The Center is also affiliated with five health services research training programs.

The Southern California Center is the natural outcome of more than 20 years of work by RAND and its affiliated institutions in reviewing the biomedical literature for evidence of benefits, harms, and costs; using meta-analysis, decision analysis, and cost-effectiveness analysis to synthesize the literature; developing measures of clinical appropriateness and practice guidelines; developing and assessing medical review criteria; and developing and assessing performance measures and other tools for translating evidence-based knowledge into clinical practice. The hallmark of this work has been (a) its multi-disciplinary nature: RAND and its affiliated institutions combine the talents of clinicians, health services researchers, epidemiologists, statisticians, economists, and advanced methods experts in meta-analysis and decision analysis; (b) the advancement of knowledge about the methods for performing literature reviews, synthesizing evidence, and developing practice guidelines or review criteria; and (c) the emphasis on developing and evaluating products for use in the real world of health care delivery.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONSERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

EVIDENCE REPORT ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

INTRODUCTION..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
MAMMOGRAPHY..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CERVICAL SMEAR CYTOLOGY ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
COLON CANCER SCREENING..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

METHODS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
IDENTIFICATION OF LITERATURE SOURCES..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
COCHRANE EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND ORGANIZATION OF CARE (EPOC) DATA BASEERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PREVIOUS SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CENTER FOR QUALITY OF CARE RESEARCH, NETHERLANDS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
HEALTH CARE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (HCQIP) ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL EVIDENCE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EXTRACTION OF STUDY-LEVEL VARIABLES AND RESULTS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EXPERT PANEL REVIEW OF EVIDENCE REPORT ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
STATISTICAL METHODS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
META-REGRESSION ANALYSIS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 1: ABSOLUTE EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH INTERVENTION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 2: RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH INTERVENTION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 3: IMPORTANT COVARIATES..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 4: COST EFFECTIVENESS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 5: ELEMENTS INSTRUMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF EACH INTERVENTIONERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

RESULTS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

IDENTIFICATION OF EVIDENCE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
DISTRIBUTION OF EVIDENCE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
DESCRIPTION OF EVIDENCE ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUALITY OF EVIDENCE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 1: ABSOLUTE EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH INTERVENTION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
META-REGRESSION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS: STANDING ORDERS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
MASS MAILINGS BY PEER REVIEW ORGANIZATIONS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
SIGMOIDOSCOPY STUDIES ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
MASS MEDIA STUDIES ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REGULATORY CHANGE STUDIES ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 2: RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH INTERVENTION ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTIPLE INTERVENTIONS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 3: IMPORTANT COVARIATES..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
AFRICAN-AMERICANS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
HISPANIC POPULATIONS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
NATIVE AMERICANS ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
RURAL POPULATIONS..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

REIMBURSEMENT SYSTEMS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
HMO VERSUS FEE FOR SERVICE	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 4: COST EFFECTIVENESS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATIONS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
MAMMOGRAPHY.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CERVICAL SMEAR CYTOLOGY.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
COLON CANCER SCREENING	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CONCLUSIONS FROM COST-EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
QUESTION 5: ELEMENTS INSTRUMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF EACH INTERVENTION.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS EFFECTIVENESS BY YEAR	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
LIMITATIONS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CONCLUSIONS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REFERENCES CITED	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
APPENDICES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REFERENCE LIST: JOURNAL ARTICLES ACCEPTED.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REFERENCE LIST: NARRATIVE PROJECT DOCUMENTS ACCEPTED.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REFERENCE LIST: JOURNAL ARTICLES NOT ACCEPTED.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REFERENCE LIST: NARRATIVE PROJECT DOCUMENTS NOT ACCEPTED.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

TABLES

Table 1. Classification for Interventions That Change Behavior	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 2. EPOC Literature Search Strategy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 3. Review Articles	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4. Expert Panel	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 5. Interventions by Service	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 6. Effectiveness of Interventions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 7. Post-Intervention Rate	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 8. Evidence Table - Studies that included Organizational Change	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 9. Effect of Mass Mailings by Peer Review Organizations on Flu Vaccinations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 10. Sigmoidoscopy Studies	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 11. Effectiveness of Single versus Multiple Interventions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 12. Marginal Effectiveness of Specific Interventions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 13. Important Covariates	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 14. Evidence Table – Studies that included Cost Effectiveness	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 15. Effectiveness of Specific Factors	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 16. Expert Reviewers	Error! Bookmark not defined.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual Model	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 2. Screening Form	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3. Abstraction Form	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 4. Literature Sources	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 5. Number of Retrieved Articles by Source	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 6. Immunizations – Study Effectiveness by Year	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 7. Mammography – Study Effectiveness by Year	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 8. Cervical Smear Cytology – Study Effectiveness by Year	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 9. Colon Cancer Screening – Study Effectiveness by Year	Error! Bookmark not defined.